

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MADRID 07931 140003Z
ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 07931

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PEPR, PBOR, SS, AG, MO, MR, SP
SUBJECT: GOS OFFICIAL ON POSSIBLE SAHARA CONFERENCE

REF: 1. RABAT 4138, 2. MADRID 7631 (BOTH NOTAL)

1. IN CONVERSATION JULY 12 WITH ADCM, THE FOREIGN
MINISTRY'S DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR AFRICA AND CONTINENTAL
ASIA, PEDRO LOPEZ AGUIRREBENGOA, OUTLINED THE CURRENT
STATE OF THE POSSIBLE SAHARA CONFERENCE (REFTELS),
SUMMING IT UP AS ONE OF WATCHFUL EXPECTATION FOLLOWING
A SUDDEN NEGATIVE REVERSE IN THE ALGERIAN APPROACH.
LOPEZ REPEATEDLY STRESSED THE SENSITIVITY OF THIS
SUBJECT FOR THE SPANISH, ESPECIALLY IN THE LIGHT OF
A POSSIBLE UPCOMING TRIP TO ALGIERS BY PRESIDENT
SUAREZ, AND URGED THAT INFORMATION HE WAS PROVIDING
US BE HELD CLOSELY.

2. ACCORDING TO LOPEZ, THE ORIGINAL INITIATIVE CAME
FROM SPANISH FOREIGN MINISTER OREJA'S DECLARATION TO
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UNSYG WALDHEIM OF SPAIN'S WILLINGNESS (WHICH IT HAS
ALSO REPEATEDLY DECLARED PUBLICLY) TO SUPPORT HIM IN
ANY MEASURES HE UNDERTOOK TO RESOLVE TENSIONS ARISING
FROM THE SAHARA PROBLEM. THE ONLY SPANISH CAVEAT WAS
THAT THIS WOULD NOT CALL INTO QUESTION THE GIVING UP
BY SPAIN IN 1976 OF ITS INTERNATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES
AS ADMINISTERING POWER. SPAIN'S POTENTIAL ROLE,

WALDHEIM WAS TOLD, COULD INCLUDE THAT OF HOST OF A CONFERENCE OF CONCERNED NATIONS, BUT STRICTLY AS AN INTERESTED AND WELL-MEANING NEIGHBOR, AND FORMER ADMINISTERING POWER, AND NOT AS AN INTERESTED PARTY.

3. WALDHEIM THEN SPOKE WITH ALGERIAN FONMIN BOUTEFLIKA, SAID LOPEZ, AND FOUND HIM AGREEABLE TO THE IDEA OF A CONFERENCE. THE ALGERIAN STIPULATIONS WERE THAT THE POLISARIO BE REPRESENTED AND THAT THE CONFERENCE SPECIFICALLY ADDRESS THE SAHARA DISPUTE. SUBSEQUENT PROBES WITH THE ALGERIANS REVEALED THAT THEY WOULD ACCEPT POLISARIO ATTENDANCE AS PART OF THEIR DELEGATION.

4. MOROCCO WAS ALSO AGREEABLE, LOPEZ CONTINUED, TO ALLOWING A POLISARIO PRESENCE AS LONG AS IT WAS NOT DESIGNATED AS SUCH. MOROCCO, IN ADDITION, INSISTED THAT ANY SUCH CONFERENCE ADDRESS THE ENTIRE NORTH AFRICAN SITUATION AND RELAXATION OF TENSIONS IN THE AREA RATHER THAN JUST FOCUS ON THE SAHARA, BUT LOPEZ INDICATED THIS DIFFERENCE DID NOT APPEAR TO CONSTITUTE AN OBSTACLE TO FURTHER PROGRESS IN PLANNING. LOPEZ WAS UNSURE TO WHAT EXTENT MOROCCO ACTUALLY CONSULTED MAURITANIA, BUT SAID MOROCCO REPORTED MAURITANIA WAS WILLING TO TAKE PART.

5. HOWEVER, LOPEZ WENT ON, THE ALGERIAN POSITION --
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WITHIN A MATTER OF HOURS -- REVERSED ITSELF, WITH THE GOA SUDDENLY INSISTING TO AN INCREDULOUS WALDHEIM THAT THE POLISARIO MUST BE A SEPARATE AND EQUAL PARTY TO THE CONFERENCE. LOPEZ EXPRESSED MYSTIFICATION OVER THE REVERSAL, BUT AGREED THAT IT MAY REFLECT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BOUTEFLIKA AND DOCTRINAIRE CIRCLES WITHIN THE FLN. WHILE THE POSSIBILITY OF A SUAREZ TRIP TO ALGIERS WAS STRICTLY SPEAKING A BILATERAL MATTER NOT CONNECTED TO THE SAHARA ISSUE, LOPEZ SAID, HE FELT THERE WAS A CONNECTION BETWEEN THE STIFFENED ALGERIAN POSTURES ON THE TWO POINTS. AS FOR THE GOS, LOPEZ ADDED, IT WAS STICKING TO ITS INSISTENCE THAT THE FISHERMEN BE RELEASED BEFORE SUAREZ TRAVEL TO ALGIERS.

6. IN SUM, THEN, SAID LOPEZ, THE GOS WAS NOW IN A STANCE OF WATCHFUL EXPECTATION. HE WAS GENERALLY BEARISH ABOUT THE ALGERIAN APPROACH, HOWEVER, NOTING THE GOA WAS PULLING OUT ALL THE STOPS ON THE CANARIES ISSUE AND MANIFESTING A FRANKLY HOSTILE ATTITUDE TOWARD SPAIN IN KHARTOUM.
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